

2 May 1975

Mr. Amrom H. Katz, Assistant Director
U. S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
Washington, D. C. 20451

Dear Amrom:

Thanks very much for your provocative, helpful and cogent letter. I was particularly interested in your thoughts on the relationship between confidence and time with respect to some of our studies. This is an important feature that we must be fully aware of.

Sincerely,

/s/ Bill

W. E. Colby
Director

WEC:blp

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UNITED STATES ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20451

April 15, 1975

Executive Order

75-5904

The Honorable
William Colby
Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Bill:

I have just read your excellent New Orleans speech and hope you will accept my belated compliments on it.

Your speech, your other presentations and the current agitation about the intelligence system of the United States call to mind four points which may, hopefully, be of use to you in what is bound to be a running dialogue with the press, Congress and the country.

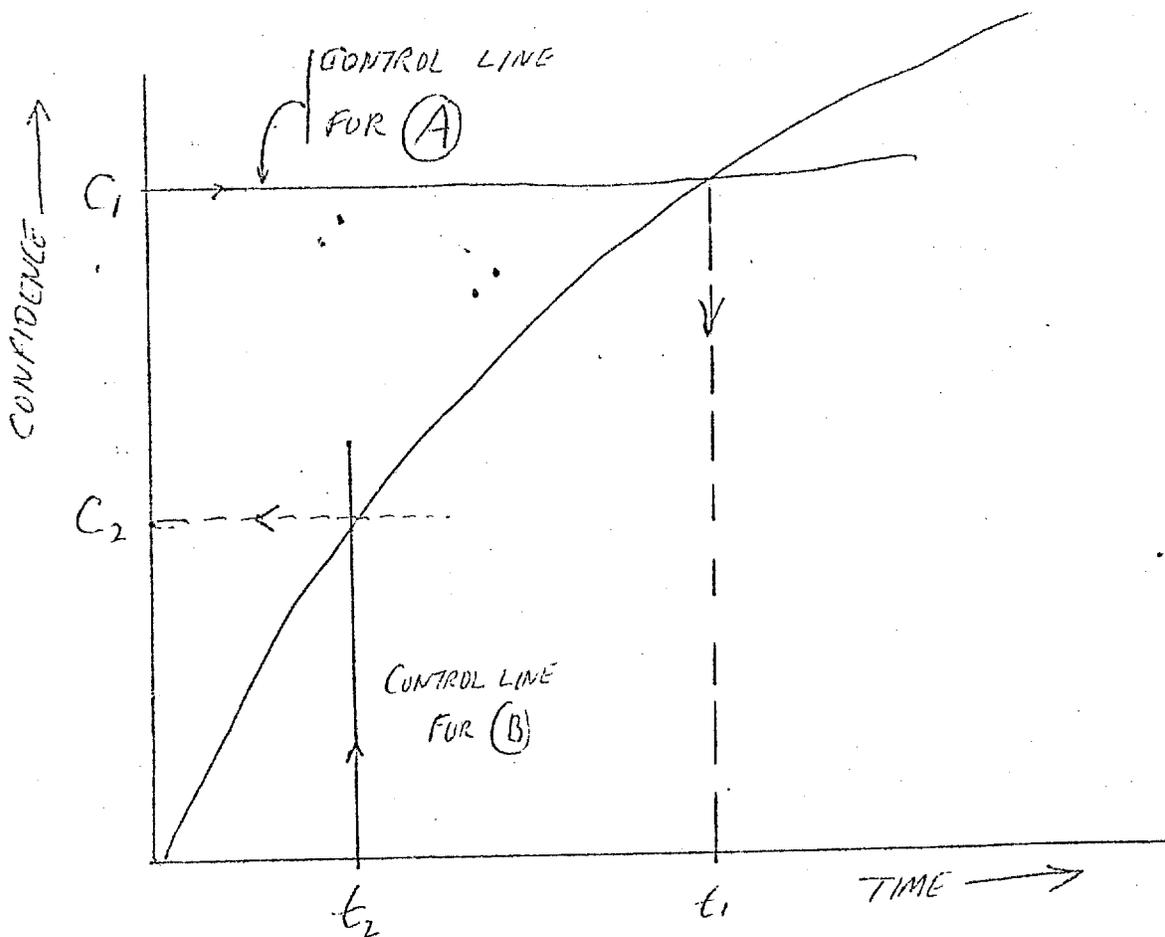
I. DECISION-MAKING: TWO PROCESSES*

Some remarks about the process of prediction are in order (see Figure 1). I want to distinguish between scientific work--call it process "A" and intelligence predicting, forecasting, and work like that--call it process "B."

In general, if you ask a scientist when he will be ready to publish his work, you will get an answer substantially like this: "When I reach a certain level of confidence, say represented by control line C_1 on Figure 1, I'll be ready to publish. And from this we find it takes time t_1 ." The control line, the determining parameter, was the confidence level (C_1) desired. In general, if his apparatus does not blow up or he does not suffer an unmitigated disaster of one form or another, progress will be as represented by the monotonic increasing curve shown in Figure 1.

*Adapted from "A Squint into the Future," February 1970.

FIGURE 1



On the other hand, the kind of question usually asked of an Intelligence Officer, a newsman, or a business manager, often takes the form: "I need the best answer by Tuesday (by Time t_2)."
Time is, in this process the determining quantity; in general, you are willing to take whatever confidence (C_2) can be derived.

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As I have drawn these two phenomena, you will observe that they are really orthogonal processes. The control lines are at right angles, and the way I've drawn these two phenomena, one may be led to believe that process B is a somewhat inferior process to process A. Nothing could be farther from the truth. There are very few scientists who are good at dealing with imperfect information, with incomplete data, and coming to useful, relevant, and correct conclusions. These two processes are not only orthogonal; they are quite different. Neither is inferior to the other; they cannot be compared.

An intelligence officer, a newsman, a businessman, a manager, in general, are usually in a regime where process B applies. Asking a scientist, trained to work under process A, to suddenly "come up with the best answer by Tuesday" is asking usually, for lots of trouble.

Occasionally there are people who can live and operate in both worlds. They are rare birds, and when recognized--are often justly rewarded for their capabilities.

So for the future. We are dealing with imperfect, incomplete, information about which there is little agreement. . . . Sometime ago the phrase "More bang for the buck" was popular. I suggest that the applicable, and more logical slogan for the intelligence/reconnaissance community will be "More useful information for the buck."

II. INTELLIGENCE AND STRENGTH

A point that is fairly obvious (and hence seldom stated) stems from the trade between military intelligence and strength. In the absence of any intelligence--to take one extreme--one may have to take out extra insurance against supposed (but not necessarily real) threats. It is quite likely that the cost of this insurance would exceed the cost of adequate intelligence. Viewed from this side, it is reasonable and proper to argue that the intelligence budget (which is

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believed to be a very small fraction of the military budget) will keep the latter budget down. ✓

III. BLATANCY AS AN IRRITANT

As you know, I have believed for a long time that there is a distinct difference between having things "generally known" and having the same things officially confirmed. This point was made with elegance and precision by Yarmolinsky.* He said: ✓

"There are matters on which one nation is willing to have another nation gather information about itself, by covert or clandestine means, so long as there need be no official recognition that the veil of secrecy has been pierced."

IV. RESPONSIBILITY: A DISTINCTION BETWEEN "IR" AND "NON"

Over the years I have participated in many debates and always found it both useful and important to distinguish between a non-responsible statement or position and an irresponsible statement or position. ✓

Difficulties arise when individuals who are nonresponsible issue irresponsible statements. ✓

I hope these observations may be of some use to you.

Sincerely,



Amrom H. Katz
Assistant Director

*Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, on S. 2224, March 30, 1972.